

DISTRICT CHILDREN'S SERVICES DIVISION – PARENT SURVEY

This report describes the results of the Parent Survey administered by Thunder Bay District Social Services Administration Board. The Parent Survey sought to evaluate parent perceptions on child care services in the District of Thunder Bay.

The main objective of this survey was to evaluate parents' levels of satisfaction with current services delivered by District Children's Services Division and; provide information that will define service areas that may require improvement.

General Findings:

1. Ninety-six percent (96%) of respondents were satisfied with the process they went through to choose child care arrangements. Seventy-five percent (75%) reported "very satisfied" and 20% "satisfied".
2. Respondents' perception of service delivery was positive. Overall, 100% reported staff are "always" or "usually" friendly, courteous, helpful, and willing to listen.
3. Ninety-eight percent (98%) of respondents indicated they are always able to communicate with staff, the waiting room is comfortable (81%), they are satisfied with appointment scheduling (98%), are aware of application information (98%), and are able to understand forms/written information (96%).
4. When respondents were asked how they found out about the child care fee subsidy program, they mentioned various sources. The most common source was a friend/neighbour/relative (44%) followed by Day care Centers at 29%, Community Agencies accounted for 17%, advertisement 2% and other sources 6%.
5. When respondents were asked to provide suggestions for improving services, they put forward the following:
 - Provide better information about application process
 - Provide more subsidized child care spaces
 - Improve contact information
 - Extended working hours to accommodate evening appointments.
 - Get real people to answer the phone
 - Create a plan that is flexible in addressing absent days
 - Enhance the process of disseminating information regarding the child fee subsidy program

Methodology

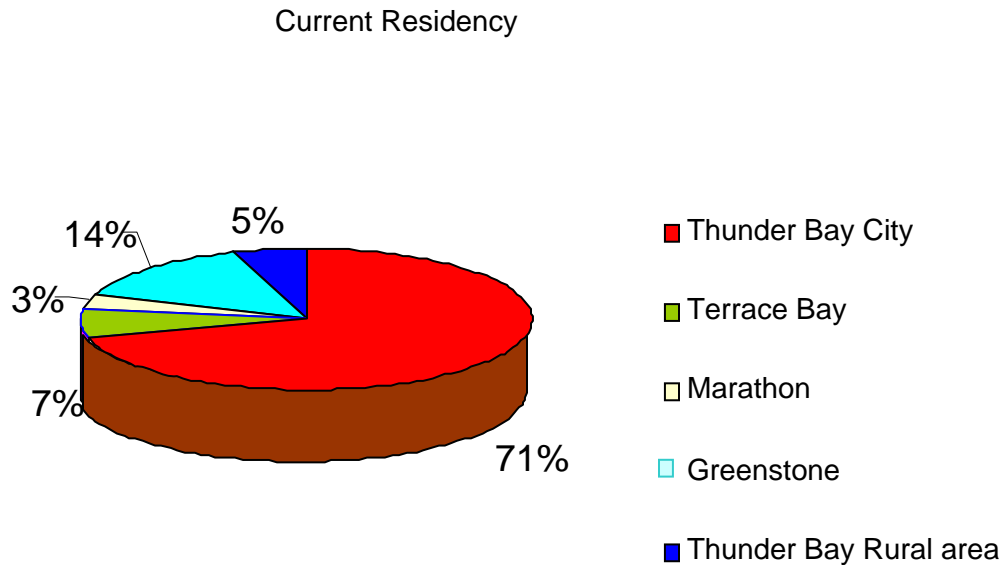
There were 243 surveys mailed out in January 2007. Potential participants were asked to complete the survey and mail it back using the envelope provided in the survey package to a third party provider for receiving and compiling. A total of 58 completed surveys were returned by March 2007, a response rate of 23.86%.

Survey Results

Profile of Respondents

Respondents were asked to indicate where they are currently living. Majority (71%) identified themselves as from the City of Thunder Bay, 14% from Greenstone, Terrace Bay/Schreiber 7%, Thunder Bay rural area 5% and Marathon/Manitouwadge 3% (see Figure 1).

Figure 1

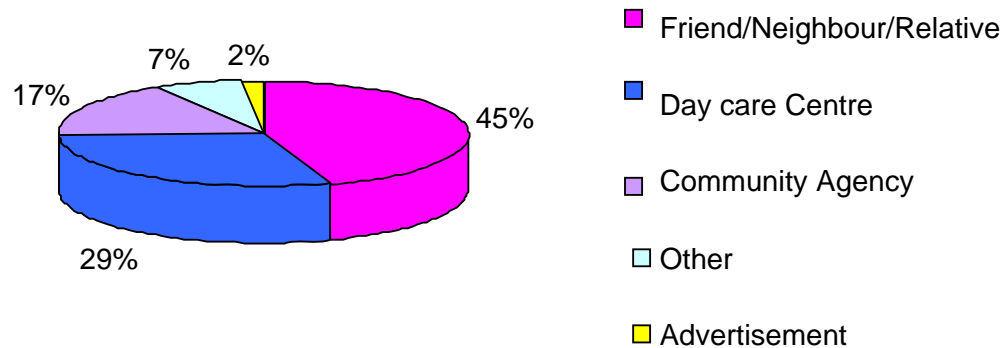


Service Information

When respondents were asked how they found out about the child care fee subsidy program, 45% reported the information came from a friend/neighbor or relative, 29% said from Day Care Centre, 17% from community agency, 2% from advertisement and other 7% (see Figure 2).

Figure 2

Fee Subsidy Program Information



Parents Satisfaction with Services

The majority of respondents provided positive responses in relation to the quality of services they receive from Children’s Services Division. As illustrated in Table 3, most parents reported that “always” or “usually” they are able to communicate with staff (98%), they find the waiting room comfortable (98%), are “always” or “usually” pleased with appointment scheduling (98%), they understand forms/written information (98%), and are aware of information that is required to complete the application (96%).

Table 3 Respondents satisfaction Service Delivery:

	I am:	Always (%)	Usually (%)	Sometimes (%)	Never (%)	Did Not Respond (%)
3.	Aware of who I need to speak to if I have questions.	67.2	27.6	3.4	1.7	-
4.	Able to use the automatic telephone system or voicemail.	62.1	13.8	8.6	12.1	3.4
5.	Able to communicate with staff who speaks my language.	94.8	3.4	-	1.7	-
6.	Provided with consistent and adequate information.	65.5	29.3	1.7	3.4	-
7.	Able to understand the forms/written information that I have to fill out.	70.7	27.6	1.7	-	-
8.	Aware of the information that is required to complete my application.	70.7	25.9	3.4	-	-

9.	Satisfied with appointment scheduling.	74.1	24.1	1.7	-	-
10.	Comfortable in the waiting room.	81.0	17.2	-	-	1.7
11.	Able to receive a response to my questions within one business day.	56.9	34.5	8.6	-	-

* The percentages provided in the tables have been rounded independently; group of percentages may not total 100.

Although most statements in table 3 were rated positively, some parents had concerns using the automated telephone or voice mail system. Twenty percent (20%) of respondents indicated they “sometimes” or “never” find the automated voice mail system easy to use, with 8% stating “sometimes” and 12% reporting “never”. Three percent (3%) of respondents offered no response to this statement.

Perception of Service Delivery

As illustrated in Table 2 the majority of respondents provided positive rating in relation to their contact with staff. An overall total of 100% of respondents indicated that staff are “always” or “usually”, friendly, courteous, helpful and willing to listen. The respondents also reported that staff are “always” or “usually” organized (96%) are knowledgeable and able to answer their questions (98%), and protective of their privacy (100%). Only 3% of respondents indicated that staff are “sometimes” or “never” organized.

Table 2 Perception of service delivery

	Staff are:	Always (%)	Usually (%)	Sometimes (%)	Never (%)
12.	Friendly, courteous, helpful, and willing to listen	82.8	17.2		
13.	Organized	74.1	22.4	1.7	1.7
14.	Knowledgeable and able to answer my questions.	79.3	19.0	1.7	
15.	Protective of my privacy	89.7	10.3		

* The percentages provided in the tables have been rounded independently; group of percentages may not total 100.

16. Overall, how satisfied are you with the process you went through to choose your child care arrangements?

Ninety-six percent (96%) of respondents indicated they are “very satisfied” or “satisfied” with the process they went through to choose child care arrangements, 75% reported “very satisfied” and 20% “satisfied”.

17. What could we do better to help you?

Out of 58 respondents who participated in the survey, 39 respondents (67.24%) did not respond to this question. Only 19 respondents (32.75%) provided suggestions on how to improve child care services. Outlined are some of the common themes that emerged:

1. Provide more subsidized spaces (more subsidized spaces with less stringent income rules).
2. Provide comprehensive information pamphlets in relation to application procedure, space availability and wait lists.
3. Provide a better telephone system. Get real people to answer the phone.
4. Provide contact information for parents who enter into the program
5. Be flexible when addressing absent days (especially when a parent is sick)
6. Extend working hours to accommodate evening appointments
7. Compliments (satisfaction with the program, services and support provided by staff).

18. Do you have any other general comments you would like to make?

Of the 58 respondents who participated in the survey, 33 respondents (56.89%) did not answer this question. Only 25 respondents (43.10%) responded and provided the following general comments.

1. Twelve (12) respondents indicated they were satisfied with the support provided by staff and complimented them on the positive level of communication and support.
2. Seven (7) respondents reported in general that they are satisfied with the program and service.
3. Six (6) respondents expressed various concerns related to the following:
 - a) Information about services and application process,
 - b) OSAP (should not be considered an income for child care fee subsidy purposes it is a loan that requires repayment).

Conclusion:

The outcome from this survey mirrors the views of parents who responded to the survey. Due to the somewhat low response rate (23.86%), it is difficult to say with confidence that the information gathered and the results obtained are representative of views of all parents who access child care services in the District. Therefore, these findings should be used as a guideline for assessing gaps in services and for developing concrete ways of addressing identified service needs.

Overall, the responses and comments of parents were largely positive in relation to the services they receive. Jointly, the respondents showed that they are satisfied with the service delivery. Therefore, the main conclusions resulting from this survey could be summarized as follows:

- The services that Children's Division provides to its clients are appreciated as being supportive, professional and very efficient.
- Respondents believe that the Children's Division provides assortment of quality services that are effective and efficient. This sentiment is reflected in respondents' level of satisfaction with services provided by Children's Division.

Respondents provided positive ratings for most aspects of the service delivery. The highest ratings are for:

1. Attentiveness and competence of staff
 - Friendly, courteous, helpful, and willing to listen (100%; "always" 82.8%, "usually" 17.2%)
 - Protective of privacy (100%; "always" 89.7%, "usually" 10.3%)
 - Knowledgeable and able to answer questions (98.3%; "always" 79.3%, "usually" 19%)
 - Organized (96.5%; "always" 74.1%, "usually" 22.4%)

2. Services

- Able to understand the forms/written information (98.3%; “always” 70.7%, “usually” 27.6%)
- Satisfied with appointment scheduling (98.2%; “always” 74.1%, “usually” 24.1%)
- Waiting room is comfortable (98.2%; “always” 81%, “usually” 17.2%)
- Able to communicate with staff (98.2%; “always” 94.8%, “usually” 3.4%)
- Aware of information required to complete an application (96.6%; “always” 70.7%, “usually” 25.9%)

Overall, majority of respondents provided positive ratings in relation to service delivery and the competence (professionalism) of staff. However, the overall positive response might not mean there are no enhancements to be made. As indicated earlier in the report, some of the respondents provided positive suggestions for services that can be realized in areas of information, relating to dissemination and contact. Other suggestions included creation of more subsidized child care spaces and a better/enhanced telephone system.